

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Consultation on the Draft Highways and Transport Masterplan for Lancaster District 25th June 2015

Report of Chief Officer (Planning and Regeneration)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the content of the Lancaster District Draft Transport Masterplan, which has been prepared by Lancashire County Council and sets out a framework for improvements to the transport networks within the district. This report sets out a number of officer views which it is recommended forms the basis for a formal response from the City Council on the Draft Masterplan.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Members acknowledge the preparation of a Highways and Transport Masterplan by Lancashire County Council as an important and necessary step in understanding the transport issues in Lancaster District and the interventions which can be delivered to address these issues.**
- (2) That the issues set out in Section 4 of this report will form the basis of the City Council's formal response to the Draft Masterplan document to submitted to Lancashire County Council for consideration as it seeks to finalise the Masterplan document.**
- (3) That the Committee agree a process for finalising the wording of the response to be drafted after the meeting. The usual methods being:
 - (a) for the Committee to delegate authority to the Chairman to agree the final response with officers**
 - (b) for officers to circulate draft wording to all members of the Committee for comment and agreement via email.****

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** To address matters of transport and accessibility, Lancashire County council has in the past prepared Local Transport Plans (LTPs). The Local Transport Plan was a single plan document which set out transport issues across the county and the interventions that the County Council planned to undertake to address the issues identified.

- 1.2 The LTP was always accompanied by an action plan which set out all the transport schemes and projects proposed by the County Council. The action plan was used as a method of obtaining regional funding and as a basis for grant funding.
- 1.3 LTP3, which was the third iteration of the Local Transport Plan, was published by the County Council in 2010 for the five-year period to 2015 and represented the final iteration of the LTP process. Following the publication of LTP3, Lancashire County Council has concentrated on the preparation of more geographically bespoke Transport Masterplans which focus on specific areas of Lancashire.
- 1.4 In all five Transport Masterplans have been either been published or are currently under preparation. These Masterplans have been prepared for the following areas:
- Central Lancashire (including Preston, Chorley and South Ribble);
 - East Lancashire (including Pendle, Hyndburn, Burnley and Rossendale);
 - West Lancashire;
 - The Fylde Coast (including Fylde and Wyre); and
 - Lancaster District.
- 1.5 The preparation of a Transport and Highways Masterplan for Lancaster District (Transport Masterplan) represents an opportunity to create a clear and bespoke framework for transport matters within the district which can focus on specific areas and issues – rather than being addressed via a more diluted county-wide document. The Transport Masterplan provides an opportunity to focus on more localised issues and clearly set out opportunities and approaches to addressing the issues identified.
- 1.6 Of the areas listed, the Transport Masterplan for Lancaster District is the least advanced in its preparation due to the stage of preparation that the City Council is at with its local development plan; this is highly relevant in the preparation of a Transport Masterplan. The Central Lancashire Masterplan was adopted in March 2013, East Lancashire's adopted in February 2014 and the West Lancashire in October 2014. The Fylde Coast Draft Masterplan was consulted upon between January and February 2015 and will be formally published later this year.

2.0 Details

- 2.1 The Transport Masterplan provides the opportunity to create a clear framework which highlights the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the district's transport network and set out an action plan which delivers schemes to improve and, where necessary, expand the network.
- 2.2 The Transport Masterplan has been prepared by Lancashire County Council, the statutory local highways authority for the district. Lancaster City Council is a key stakeholder in its preparation. Through involvement in its preparation the City Council can ensure that the finalised document supports other plans, strategies and projects that the City Council prepares – in particular the Local Development Plan.

- 2.3 Lancashire County Council undertook a 7 week consultation on the Draft Masterplan from Thursday 19th April and concluded on Thursday 7th May. Within the early weeks of this consultation period the County Council organised a small number of exhibition / drop-in events at Carnforth Library (23rd March), Morecambe Library (24th March) and Lancaster Library (26th March). These events were staffed by officers of the County Council and assisted where required by officers from the City Council's Planning and Housing Policy Team.
- 2.4 Whilst the conclusion of the consultation period was the 7th May 2015 the County Council acknowledge the importance of the input from the City Council into the preparation of the Masterplan. It has therefore been agreed that a late submission from the City Council will be accepted and will be given serious consideration prior to any Masterplan document being finalised.
- 2.5 The issues identified in this report may form the basis of the City Council's response which will be prepared following this meeting.

3.0 Content of the Draft Transport Masterplan

- 3.1 To assist Members in developing an understanding of the content of the Draft Masterplan this section sets out some of the key content of the draft document.

Transport Vision for Lancaster District

- 3.2 The Draft Masterplan includes a transport vision which outlines how the County Council sees the transport situation in the district by 2031. For Members reference this draft vision is set out below:

'By 2031 Lancaster City Centre is a vibrant and successful core to the district, with no air quality issues, no gyratory congestion and so no barriers to sustainable travel. Pedestrians and cyclists can move around easily and freely, through safe and attractive public spaces. This is because the centre is largely free of traffic. There is no more through traffic so there are only vehicles that have to be there and most of these are ultra-low emission [vehicles].

Away from the city centre, the residential roads, old and new are quiet as traffic no longer rat-runs trying to escape the gyratory. Walking and cycling are now the norm for many journeys and car clubs mean that there is far less need to own a car. Ultra-low emission cars are now commonplace as charging is straightforward wherever the car is kept, on or off the road.

Without the gyratory to contend with, public transport is also more reliable and new links to South Lancaster means that the University has been able to expand and maintain its prestigious reputation. Those who work in the area almost all commute by sustainable modes such as rapid transit or leave their cars at the Park and Ride.

Morecambe is blossoming again, a revitalised town where everyone can get to where they want to go easily on foot or by bike and where the amazing promenade gives way seamlessly to an attractive and strong commercial centre. The town is now a 'must visit' attraction on the Lancashire Coast and Morecambe Bay tourist trails.

In Heysham, the old village, like Morecambe is a key tourist destination now readily accessible without a car. South Heysham and the Port are now a thriving focal point for industry with the completed link road providing superb access to the motorway network.

Carnforth is an important service centre for the north of the district, with shared spaces making the centre a much more attractive place to visit. The improved rail links have also made the town far more significant to visitors and the station is now integral to the town centre.

Galgate is a quiet village, no longer straddling the city's main link to the motorway.

Getting between towns and further afield has also changed beyond recognition.

The rail network now provides high quality, fast services to and from Morecambe and rail travel around the [Morecambe] Bay is more straightforward. Many passengers now use the Bentham line as well. Part of this is because the public spaces around the stations are now attractive and it is easy to walk and cycle to the stations or to leave an electric car on charge.

Public transport is now reliable because buses aren't held up in the city centre, so they are used extensively for travel between the city centre and other main urban areas. The rapid transit service that links Morecambe to South Lancaster via the city centre is particularly popular as are the two Park and Ride sites, not least because these services use ultra-low emission vehicles which are quieter and smoother than conventional buses.

The network for non-motorised traffic is now comprehensive. For those who want direct routes, the roads are much quieter and safer, with dedicated provision for cyclists on the main radial routes in the district. For those who don't want to go on the roads, there are dedicated links for all users between the main urban centres with quiet routes linking to them.

This network also links the district to its neighbours to the north and south through the long distance trails that bring significant number of visitors to Lancaster to explore the canal and the Lune.'

- 3.3 The above vision represents a key element of the Draft Masterplan as the remainder of the document sets out how the County Council will seek to achieve this vision via the delivery of strategies, schemes and projects.

Options to Deliver the Transport Vision

- 3.4 The Draft Transport Masterplan sets out series of three options to deliver the above transport vision which includes a 'Business as Usual' Option, 'Improve what we have' option and a 'Improve and Extend' Option.
- 3.5 The '*Business as Usual*' option is a scenario where projects which have been already funded and are underway (including the Link Road) would be delivered by any further improvements would be limited to minor, small-scale, interventions.

- 3.6 Investment in the district's transport network would be low and the implications for this lack of investment would be significant with further reductions in road capacity across the district and little further encouragement in the use of sustainable forms of transport such as cycling and walking.
- 3.7 It is concluded by the County Council that this option would not seek to deliver the vision set out within the Draft Masterplan.
- 3.8 The '*Improve what we have*' option would seek to deliver the already programmed schemes (including the Link Road) and further complimentary measures beyond those which have already been proposed by the County Council. This option would seek to maximise the efficiency of existing road capacity both within Lancaster City Centre and at congestion points across the district.
- 3.9 Investment in the wider transport network would remain limited and would only seek small scale interventions to make the existing networks more efficient. Again, the County Council concludes that this option would not seek to deliver the vision set out within the Draft Masterplan.
- 3.10 The final option, '*Improve and Expand*' seeks to deliver all the elements which have been previously considered through the earlier options and also seek to deliver more major interventions, delivering more radical changes to the district's transport network to reduce the need to travel by car and encourage growth in the use of more sustainable transport methods such as cycling, walking and public transport.
- 3.11 This final option is seen by the County Council as the most appropriate option to deliver the Transport Vision for Lancaster District.

Strategies, Schemes and Projects proposed for Lancaster District

- 3.12 The identification of specific strategies, schemes and projects are set out in the Draft Masterplan by focusing on specific geographical areas within the district which include:
- South Lancaster
 - Lancaster
 - Carnforth
 - Morecambe
 - Heysham, and,
 - Rural Lancaster.
- 3.13 The report below sets out the proposed interventions for each geographical area.
- 3.14 The Draft Masterplan sets out a summary of the key issues which define the transport situation in the South Lancaster area. This include the fact that the A6 is a key transport corridor between Lancaster City Centre, Lancaster University and South to Junction 33 of the M6 with congestion arising on key points along its length (notably at Galgate and the City Centre). The levels of congestion on this transport corridor also raises significant issues in relation to air quality and the safety of vulnerable road users (i.e. cyclists and pedestrians).

- 3.15 A number of potential measures are set out in the Draft Masterplan to better understand and address the matters of the A6 corridor through South Lancaster which includes:
- The re-numbering of the A6 which will allow for opportunities to implement a number of de-tuning measures which will encourage greater use of the new Heysham / M6 Link Road as a method of accessing Lancaster City Centre.
 - ‘Lancaster Links Project’ which seeks to increase the usage of cycling and walking through Lancaster in order to increase health benefits and reduce the use of private vehicles.
 - ‘Lancaster Reach Project’ which will further consider the role of a rapid transit service between Lancaster University – Central Lancaster – Morecambe and Heysham through the preparation of further feasibility work.
 - Future consideration of opportunities to re-configure Junction 33 of the M6 which could significantly alleviate traffic in Galgate. Such an intervention would be a significant project and could only realistically be delivered should strategic development occur in South Lancaster via the City Council’s Local Development Plan. Given the current lack of clarity of the direction of future growth this intervention is merely noted within the Draft Masterplan.
- 3.16 The Draft Masterplan highlights that one of the key transport issues for Lancaster district to deal with is the congestion within the city centre gyratory system. This has significant implications on the local environment (particularly in relation to air quality management) and highway safety. The current state of the gyratory has economic implications for the district and creates a significant barrier for all types of traffic movement across the city centre.
- 3.17 Two potential measures are set out in the Draft Masterplan to address traffic issues in Central Lancaster which include:
- The preparation of a ‘City Centre Action Plan’ (also known as a ‘Movement Strategy’) which would seek to fundamentally re-shape the gyratory in order to reduce through traffic and using the road space to facilitate more sustainable modes of travel. This could involve the restraining the movement of general through-traffic within the City Centre.
 - Encouraging the use of vehicles which have ultra-low emissions via an ‘Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) Strategy’. Such a strategy would seek to encourage the use of ULEVs by encourage ultra-low emissions buses and cars and providing associated infrastructure to make such modes more attractive to use.
- 3.18 The Draft Masterplan highlights a number of key issues which are similar to those already identified within the City Council’s Morecambe Area Action Plan. The Draft Masterplan highlights that the town centre is disconnected from the wider Morecambe area and deters sustainable transport choices, it also recognises that Marine Drive / Promenade acts as a major through-route from the M6 to the industrial areas of Heysham.
- 3.19 Two potential measures set out in the Draft Masterplan which would address

transport matters in Morecambe include:

- A 'Movement Strategy' for Morecambe which builds on the work already undertaken in the Morecambe Area Action Plan and seeks to make Central Morecambe genuinely accessible to all modes of transport, particularly to increase the use of cycling and walking. The strategy would also seek to address linkages between the town centre and other surrounding areas – in particular the West End of Morecambe.
- Investigating improvements to the Morecambe to Lancaster rail line via further study work. The outcomes of such work could include better accessibility to stations, better station facilities, better rolling stock and increases to service frequency and electrification of the rail line.

3.20 In relation to Heysham, the Draft Masterplan suggests that the lack of accessibility to Heysham and its employment areas will be significantly improved upon the opening of the Heysham / M6 Link Road.

3.21 Therefore the aim of the Draft Masterplan for the Heysham area is to maximise the benefits of the Link Road both to the road users themselves by also mitigating against any impacts from increasing HGV usage. Furthermore, the document will seek to provide better linkages between Heysham and Lancaster for sustainable modes of transport which links to the strategy work provided via the 'Lancaster Links' which is described in more detail in paragraph 3.15 of this report.

3.22 The Draft Masterplan recognises the importance of Carnforth in the North of Lancashire but that it lacks access to a number of key rail services, including no platforms for a number of important national and regional rail services. It also highlights the level of congestion which occurs in the town centre at peak times which has resulted in air quality issues. The potential measures set out for Carnforth include:

- Improvement of the public realm and traffic management within Carnforth Town Centre which focuses on improvements along Market Street that allow for a more user-friendly environment for all, particularly pedestrian and cyclists.
- Investigation will take place on the opportunities for more train services to stop at Carnforth, however such investigation will be dependent on a number of expected changes to services and franchise agreements over the next few years.

3.23 The Draft Masterplan highlights that for rural areas of the district the issues of isolation and accessibility to a wider range of sustainable transport modes remains an issue. The potential measures proposed for rural areas include:

- A 'Rural Connections Study' which will investigate the improvement of cycling and walking links in rural areas and the potential alternatives to traditional public transport services (i.e. buses) and what is the best way for public transport to support the rural economy.
- Investigation will take place on the opportunities for a better rail service between Carnforth and North Yorkshire via the Bentham Line, particularly looking to see if service improvements can attract a larger level of leisure users and play a bigger role in commuting.

4.0 Issues Arising from the Draft Transport Masterplan

- 4.1 In responding to the Draft Masterplan consultation there are a number of issues which are recommended by officers to form the basis of a formal response from Lancaster City Council.
- 4.2 Any response provided by the City Council should seek to ensure that the finalised Transport Masterplan can deliver meaningful opportunities for improvement to the local transport network. These issues are set out in more detail below.

General Principles of the Draft Transport Masterplan

- 4.3 The development of the Heysham / M6 Link Road, which is due to be completed in 2016, provides a generational opportunity to influence changes within the local transport system, using the road capacity created by the new Link Road to incentivise and encourage other forms of more sustainable travel.
- 4.4 To achieve the modal change towards more sustainable forms of transport, as described in the Draft Transport Masterplan, then sufficient opportunity must be given to encourage the use of sustainable methods of transport over the private car. The Masterplan, as currently written, does not provide sufficient encouragement or detail over exactly how this modal change will be fully achieved.
- 4.5 To achieve any modal change the outcomes of the Lancaster's 'City Centre Action Plan' will be vitally important. It is therefore imperative that this Action Plan is undertaken, without delay, in order to have a clear understanding of how a modal shift can be delivered. Without a clear strategy there is concern that any meaningful shift towards sustainable transport modes will not be achieved.

Reliance on Future Studies and Assessments

- 4.6 The Draft Masterplan relies significantly on future assessment work to inform potential future interventions. Given the formal nature of the Masterplan document there is a need for it to be informed by relevant information and evidence, just the same as with the preparation of the City Council's own Local Development Plan.
- 4.7 There is concern that a Masterplan which is over-reliant on future assessment work will lack weight and lack meaningful interventions to address transport issues within the district, it seeks to defer many important decisions to future documents which have less statutory weight than the formal Masterplan document. This may have implications in addressing transport matters through the planning process and obtaining funding to deliver future projects.
- 4.8 Whilst concern exists on this over reliance it is accepted that a significant number of variables exist which restrict the ability of the Transport Masterplan to directly address transport matters. These variables include the stage of preparation on the City Council's Local Development Plan (see below) and the implications on the road network following the opening of the M6 / Heysham Link Road.

- 4.9 Given these variables it will be important that future studies and assessment work, including the 'City Centre Action Plan', should be prepared at an appropriate time to understand the implications of the Link Road and emerging Development Plan and deliver the modal shift discussed in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.5 above.

Relationship with the City Council's Local Development Plan

- 4.10 The role of the Transport Masterplan will be to address both existing transport issues and the impacts of future development within the district as planned for within the local development plan – as prepared by Lancaster City Council.
- 4.11 This relationship has worked very well in Central Lancashire where housing growth in North Preston has been delivered alongside significant improvements to local transport infrastructure including the re-configuring of the local road network, the creation of new roads and motorway junction and the creation of a new rail station. All these improvements has already been identified within the Transport Masterplan for Central Lancashire.
- 4.12 The delivery of development within the district to meet future needs (i.e. preparation of the Land Allocations DPD) is not as advanced as Central Lancashire. As a result no decisions have been made by the City Council over the levels of growth needed nor the location of such growth. As a consequence it should be acknowledged that it is difficult for the Transport Masterplan document to plan for the transport implications of future development.

Future Working Relationships between the City and County Council

- 4.13 The County Council anticipates that the adopted Transport Masterplan will be published in autumn 2015. Given the issues above and the localised matters which will arise from the implementation of specific highways and transport schemes it is very important that a continuing dialogue is established between the authorities, both at a Member or Officer level. To achieve this the City Council will be recommending that a formal mechanism is agreed to establish future involvement and address issues of local governance.
- 4.14 These issues and others, such as the balance of improving the transport infrastructure to cope with new housing and development, were discussed with Group Leaders at a meeting on 18 June 2015. Bullet points from that meeting are attached to the report as Appendix 1.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The preparation of a Highways and Transport Masterplan (Transport Masterplan) is seen as a positive step in addressing local transport matters and provides a better opportunities to deal with local transport issues than the previous, county-wide, Local Transport Plan. Therefore the principles of the Masterplan should be supported.
- 5.2 Whilst the principle of the Transport Masterplan is accepted and supported, there are a number of specific issues which should form the basis for an official response from the City Council which are set out in Section 4 of this report.

- 5.3 It is recommended that the City Council's response sets out the above issues and encourages continuing dialogue between the two authorities to ensure that the Transport Masterplan is effectively delivered at the appropriate time to ensure that the benefits of the Heysham / M6 Link Road are realised and the shift to more sustainable transport methods can be achieved.
- 5.4 The Committee will need to agree on a method for finalising the wording of the response to be drafted after the meeting, either by delegating this to the Chairman; by individual members commenting on the draft via email or by some other suitable arrangement to be determined by the Committee.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

The Transport and Highways Masterplan and its delivery will seek to provide a range and choice of transport modes, increasing accessibility and encouraging the use of sustainable transport methods. The Masterplan seeks to encourage a modal change to sustainable transport methods which seek to tackle issues which are air quality and highway safety and are accessible for all sections of the community.

Achieving sustainable development through enhanced transport linkages will also assist in achieving the Council's Corporate Vision of 'Promoting city, coast and countryside, securing safe and prosperous community that's proud of its natural and cultural assets and provides lasting opportunities for all' and its associated priorities.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising at this stage. The Transport and Highways Masterplan for Lancaster District will promote the implementation of transport schemes within the district, however. This will lead to opportunities for investment in the transport networks in the Lancaster District area. It may also result in the opportunity for the City Council to contribute to the implementation of transport schemes through future budgetary decisions, subject to future priorities and affordability, or through securing monies through new development.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

No known resource implications for Human Resources

Information Services:

No known resource implications for Information Services

Property:

No known resource implications for Property Services

Open Spaces:

No known resource implications for Open Space

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Highways and Transport Masterplan for the District of Lancaster (March 2015)

Available to download from:

[http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/strategies-policies-plans/roads,-parking-and-travel/highways-and-transport-masterplans/lancaster-district-highways-and-transport-masterplan-\(draft\).aspx](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/strategies-policies-plans/roads,-parking-and-travel/highways-and-transport-masterplans/lancaster-district-highways-and-transport-masterplan-(draft).aspx)

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